

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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FLOOR DEBATE

March 25, 2002 LB 1063, 1085

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Jensen would move to amend FA945 with AM3259. (Legislative Journal page 1081.)

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Jensen, you're recognized to open on your amendment.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the Legislature, this amendment would raise cigarette taxes 50 cents per pack. The dollars would go, 2 cents to the 309 Committee, \$5 million of the revenue would go to, in 2003, to support the Kids Connection, which runs out. If you will recall, we originally funded that for 5 years, actually through LB 1063. We funded that for 10 years or, excuse me, for 5 years and next year that will terminate and we have no way at this present time to fund that. Also, \$7 million would go into the Tobacco Control and Prevention Program. This was LB 1436 that was established by Senator Bohlke some three years ago that also runs out this next year. It doesn't do any good to put money into a drug program and then stop the funding because you will see the use go right back up. The rest of the dollars...oh, also, by the way, it would tax the other tobacco products identical to what the Revenue Committee had and the rest of the dollars would go into the General Fund. The original bill that I did submit to the Revenue Committee had those dollars going into health care. That would be my preference. At this point in time, today, I have it going into the General Fund. I still think that a lot of that would end up into health care. Why should we do that? Every day 7 Nebraskans die from smoking-related illnesses; 26,000 Nebraskans die each year from smoking-related causes. It is projected that 35,000 Nebraska's youths will become smokers and die prematurely as adults because of smoking-related illnesses. Approximately 23.3 percent of Nebraskans smoke. Approximately 33.7 percent of ninth to twelfth graders in Nebraska smoke, and approximately 10 percent of sixth to eighth graders in Nebraska smoke. Now why should we not do this? And, yes, we've all got letters from smokers who have said we've paid our fair share. We've paid more than our fair share. No, they have not. They have not when statistics tell us that Nebraska spends \$844 million every year on tobacco-related diseases. We spend \$45 million every year in